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ABSTRACT

This report contains tabulations of responses to a questionnaire sent to the persons in each state education agency responsible for coordinating the programs of Special Needs in Vocational Education. Each respondent was asked to identify one program serving Special Needs in his state. The questionnaire also asked whether the state had held a cooperative conference involving vocational education, vocational rehabilitation, and special education, and whether the state had an organized program of inservice training for administrators of Special Needs programs jointly involving the three agencies. A final question was, "In order to help you to better administer your program at the state level, what are your needs in such areas as information, training programs, and administration?" The report of this survey closes with a number of conclusions and recommendations. (Author/MLF)

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NATIONAL SURVEY OF STATE SPECIAL NEEDS PERSONNEL SERVING HANDICAPPED AND DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

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May, 1975

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EA 007 826

National Survey of State Special Needs Personnel Serving Handicapped and Disadvantaged Students in Vocational Education

Presented here is an addendum to and a logical outgrowth of the project for continuing education for Special Education administrators. The parent program, begun in 1973 at the University of Minnesota and supported by grant HO-341SS from the Federal Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, is known as the Special Education Administration Training Program (SEATP).

As the SEATP progressed, it was found to present both a need and an opportunity in relation to Vocational Education and Vocational Rehabilitation. The need arises because the resources of these agencies at the local program level are most effective if they operate together; this makes interface with Special Education desirable. This was highlighted by the emerging evidence that Vocational Education programs serving disadvantaged and handicapped students (Special Needs programs) are in a stage of expansion similar to that experienced by Special Education.

This expansion gives rise to a number of problems and needs--the most obvious being to staff the growing number of managerial positions in Special Needs at the local level throughout the country. It has been necessary to carry out this staffing even though no pool of pretrained personnel existed. Six years after the passage of the 1968 Vocational Education Amendments, there is still no known preservice training program; nor is there any known comprehensive in-service training program for those who must function in this capacity.

Another need relates to the joint use of Vocational Education, Special Education, and Vocational Rehabilitation resources. The Special Needs administrator with adequate backgrounding in all three agency operations is

rare, almost to the point of nonexistence. On the other hand, each of the agencies represents a teachable core discipline.

Altogether, the needs and problems in this matter are largely conjectural. This fact alone constitutes a problem; information about Special Needs practices is very hard to locate and much of the basic information has never been assembled. While such a state of affairs is unavoidable in the early years of programming, it is not a state of affairs that necessarily must continue; and SEATP offers a head start in the solution of some of the problems and needs just discussed.

Although the role of the Special Needs director is probably different from that of the local Special Education director in many respects, it is also likely that there are some similarities. The degree of similiarity is an empirical question that can be settled by procedures similar to those used to delineate the role of the Special Education director.

The competency-oriented training approach in SEATP has good applicability to a potential training program for Special Needs program directors using some of the techniques devised for SEATP. It should be possible to determine what competencies are required in order to direct a local program of Special Needs; and by bringing together resources from the three agencies into the design of an in-service training program, the necessary interdisciplinary competence should be attained.

It is for this reason that an addendum to SEATP was developed and the inquiry into Special Needs established. The inquiry planned the following four components: an inquiry from state Special Needs consultants to acquire basic information and solicit their perception of needs; site visits to operating Special Needs programs with joint Vocational Education, Special Education, and Vocational Rehabilitation involvement, to observe a range of

operating patterns; a job or position description, to be solicited from local administrators of Special Needs programs in each of the fifty states; and a goal-setting conference of experts in the three disciplines, with particular emphasis upon Special Needs in Vocational Education.

The following material reports the first of these activities, the survey of state coordinators.

PROCEDURES

The survey of state Special Needs coordinators was conducted by mail, supplemented by telephone contacts.

The intended target population consisted of the persons who, in each state education agency, are responsible for coordinating the programs of Special Needs in Vocational Education. The titles were expected to vary, but it was correctly expected that each state would have some person or persons allocated this responsibility. The source list was the "Directory of State Officials with Responsibilities for Vocational Education of the Disadvantaged and Handicapped" furnished by the United States Office of Education (U.S.O.E.). The list was dated November, 1973, and had handwritten corrections said to be current as of September, 1974. For some states only one person was listed. For other states as many as three names were given. Most of the titles appeared to be within the definition of the intended target, but others were questionable, e.g., "Director of Special Education."

A questionnaire was sent to each of the persons on the U.S.O.E. list. Each respondent was asked to identify one program serving Special Needs in his state. The questionnaire also asked whether the state had held a cooperative conference involving Vocational Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Special Education, and whether the state had an organized program

of in-service training for people who administer Special Needs programs jointly involving the three agencies. A final question was, "In order to help you to better administer your program at the state level, what are your needs in such areas as information, training programs, and administration?"

At least one response was obtained from each of the fifty states. In order to obtain this response, follow-up letters and telephone calls were sometimes necessary. In several instances the person named on the U.S.O.E. list was no longer employed in that capacity. In other states the responsibility actually lay with a person other than the one listed. In those few instances where confusion remained as to who carried the responsibility for Special Needs programs, a telephone call yielded fairly definitive answers.

Follow-up was terminated when each state had yielded at least one response. Governmental units other than the states also yielded some responses, but they were omitted from tallying because each seemed to constitute such a special circumstance. In all, 58 responses were obtained from the fifty states.

Data were then tallied as recorded in the next section.

As an additional activity not further reported in this paper, the local programs nominated by state personnel are being contacted. Two states were explicit in saying that they had no local program they wished to nominate.

RESULTS

At least one response and sometimes more than one was received from each state. The responses were then tallied.

Each respondent was asked to identify one exemplary program serving Special Needs in that state. Correspondence accompanying the questionnaire requested that nomination be that of a program jointly involving the resources of Vocational Education, Special Education, and Vocational Rehabilitation and that it be a local level, public school program.

Table 1 shows the tally of nominations on a state-by-state basis. Since some states had more than one respondent, the total number of nominations is greater than 50. However, since the interest was in at least one program per state, the tally is in terms of the response from each state which appeared most adequately to meet the project criteria. From the available information, it appears that 43 states nominated criteria-meeting programs and that 5 states nominated programs that are questionable in this regard. (Inquiry to those projects nominated will establish whether each meets the project's criteria for inclusion in further investigation.) Two states were explicit in saying that they had no programs they cared to recommend for observation because the state of the art was not well enough developed.

The state's Special Needs personnel were also asked whether their state had held a state-wide cooperative conference involving the three agencies of Vocational Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Special Education. To compose Table 2, which shows the result of this tally, all of the evidence in correspondence and communication was considered. From this, it appears that 6 states have held such a conference involving all three agencies, 1 state has held a conference including only Vocational Education and Special Education, and 7 states have held conferences in which the identity of the agencies is not clear from the correspondence. In 3 states there are standing committees or similar mechanisms to carry on this kind of coordinative meeting. Four states did not clearly answer the question. However, 29 states, nearly 60% of the 50, report that they have not held any such coordinative conference.

TABLE 1

Answers of state Special Needs personnel to request that they "identify one exemplary program serving Special Needs in your state." Question amplified by accompanying correspondence. One tally per state, most adequate response tallied for multiple-reply states.

Nominated program which appears to meet project criteria	43
Nominated program which appears not to meet criteria	5
State does not wish to recommend any of its programs for observation	2
TOTAL	50

TABLE 2

Responses of state Special Needs personnel to question, "Has your state held a statewide (not regional or multi-state) cooperative conference involving all three of these agencies: Vocational Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Special Education?" One tally per state, all correspondence and communication considered.

Yes (and evidence indicates a full three-agency conference)	6
Yes (and evidence indicates Vocational Education and Special Education only)	1
Yes (evidence unclear as to which agencies involved)	7
Yes (state has a standing committee or similar mechanism)	3
No	29
Question not answered	4
TOTAL	50

The 29 states that have not held conferences were asked to indicate whether they anticipate holding one. The results are shown in Table 3. About one-half of the states have no plan to hold a coordinative conference among the three agencies. Two states are making other arrangements and 8 states have conference plans. Some of the plans are indicated to be imminent.

Each respondent was asked, "Does your state have an organized program of in-service training for people who directly administer Special Needs programs jointly involving Vocational Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Special Education?" Although the question appears to be explicit, the results indicate that it was subject to misinterpretation.

Table 4 indicates the responses to this question. Over 60% of the states report that they have no such program. Of the 15 states reporting an in-service training program, evidence indicates that 8 have programs designed for teachers, 5 have programs that are of incidental interest to administrators, and 2 have in-service training programs on which the available evidence does not indicate the intended recipients. No state reports a training program together with evidence that the program is specifically administrative in content.

The respondents were asked who conducts the programs, but because of the above results, the responses have not been tallied. The teacher in-service training programs appear to be about evenly divided among colleges and state education agencies. The project received substantial reports of in-service training curricula, agendas, or training materials from 7 states.

Much more difficult to tally is the material shown in Table 5. The respondents were asked an open-ended question: "In order to help you to better administer your program at the state level, what are your needs of such areas

TABLE 3

Responses of the 29 states who report not having held a conference involving Vocational Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Special Education as to whether they anticipate such a conference in the future.

Yes, do anticipate holding a conference	8
No, do not anticipate holding a conference	13
Have discussed it	1
Making other arrangements	2
Question not answered	5
TOTAL	29

TABLE 4

Responses to the question, "Does your state have an organized program of in-service training for people who directly administer Special Needs programs jointly involving Vocational Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Special Education?" All correspondence and communication considered in determining tally, one response assembled for each state.

No	32
Yes (and evidence indicates that the program is designed for teachers)	8
Yes (and evidence indicates that the program is of interest primarily to teachers, incidentally to administrators)	5
Yes (no clear evidence of target trainees)	2
Yes (and evidence indicates specific administrative content)	0
Question unanswered	3
TOTAL	50

TABLE 5

Responses of state Special Needs personnel to the question, "In order to help you to better administer your program at the state level, what are your needs in such areas as information, training, and administration?" Responses of all 58 respondents from the 50 states tallied.

Training and training-related statements	36
Training for field personnel or unspecified	9
Training for local supervisors	2
Teacher training	8
Knowledge of other agencies' programs	6
Training in management and information systems	4
Orientation of mainstream to Special Needs	7
Needs related to service programs	21
Instructional strategies and materials	12
Programs for particular Special Needs groups	3
Use of mainstream and related resources	6
Needs related to pupil personnel services	10
Techniques for student assessment and follow-up	7
Other pupil support services	3
Organizational and structural needs	45
Coordination with Voc. Ed. and Special Ed.	4
Interagency coordination, general	14
Improved administrative structures	3
Program design and evaluation techniques	14
More funds, more staff	10
Clearer leadership, guidelines, legislation	7
Miscellaneous or ambiguous responses	6
TOTAL	125

as information, training programs, and administration?" Classification of the responses is necessarily subjective and many of the responses are ambiguous. Table 5 represents a sincere attempt to cast the responses into meaningful categories. No attempt was made to reduce the responses to a single set from each state, since each respondent was considered to have a valid opinion and since the categorization of open-ended responses cannot yield reliable proportions.

The responses indicate that the state Special Needs personnel have concerns, which they perceive as needs, that extend to the local level. They quite clearly feel a responsibility to the front line.

A number of their perceived needs relate to training, including training of themselves and of local staff. Many of their other concerns have to do with organizational and structural needs with fairly frequent specific mention of interagency knowledge and coordination. Some of their other needs, such as those that involve instructional strategies and other direct services, are so phrased as to indicate that the state personnel feel a lack of communication among themselves.

This tally of needs as perceived as applying to themselves by the state Special Needs personnel should be considered supplementary to the needs of local administrators of programs for the disadvantaged and the handicapped.

As a final question, each respondent was asked whether he would like to have a copy of the findings. Without significant exception, the respondents checked the affirmative response. This report is consequently being sent to each respondent.

INTERPRETATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following material is based upon the experience with and responses from the state Special Needs personnel.

Local Programs

In general, it appears from the state level responses that most states have local Special Needs programs with identifiable administrative or supervisory personnel. The programs show a great deal of variability, and the pattern is what might be expected in the relatively early years of establishing this kind of program.

Recommendation. The SEATP program should (and will) follow through with an interrogation of the nominated local programs. The major purpose is to delineate the nature of the administrative or supervisory position. Not entirely incidentally, the inquiry will also clarify the organizational and student characteristic context in which the job of local administrator is performed.

State Special Needs Personnel

This survey shows several things about the Special Needs personnel in the various states. Although it is clear that each state has people designated as responsible for the coordination of Special Needs programs, the administrative location and title of such people are not uniform. Furthermore, the official list is inaccurate in some instances and incomplete in others. The list has not kept pace with turnover and other organizational developments. A better list would be both possible and desirable, especially now that the state Special Needs personnel have shown an interest in organizing and communicating among themselves. The experience of this survey shows that the correct individuals can be readily identified through correspondence and telephone contact.

Recommendation. The "National Directory of State Special Needs Personnel" should be carefully revised and updated by the appropriate unit in the

United States Office of Education. The revised list should be widely circulated and made available to each of the persons listed, as well as to the state chief school officers and the appropriate training institutions in Vocational Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Special Education.

Coordination Mandate

The 1968 Vocational Education Amendments state in part that "the state plan shall provide for cooperative arrangements with the State Special Education Agency, the State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency, or other state agencies having responsibility for the education of handicapped persons in the state." This survey indicates that compliance with this mandate remains undemonstrated. Few of the states have formal coordinating mechanisms according to the responses received. It is assumed that the formal state plans make provision for this, and there are some indications that many local programs carry out actual coordination. However, the degree to which the tri-agency service is integrated state-wide is short of what would be desirable. Ideas and experiences as to how the coordination can be effectively carried out need to be better communicated. The evident local readiness to coordinate services may well lead this way.

Recommendation. One or more models of successful local integration of Vocational Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Special Education should be carefully described and evaluated and the results made readily available within each state. These models should take into account administrative structures, technological blends, the accounting of student/client management, and resource allocation as a minimum. Continued activities of the project reported here can make a significant contribution.

Operating Guidelines

State and local level Special Needs personnel indicate that they are unsure of such fundamental operating guidelines as the identity of students who have Special Needs and the organizational and programmatic means for meeting those needs. The responses of this survey also occasionally point out the difficulty of instituting and maintaining a knowledgeable and receptive orientation to Special Needs within the isolated framework of the well-established and conventional field of Vocational Education. A related cluster of needs is indicated by the frequent mention of concern over guidelines and legislation, leadership, mainstream and other agencies, coordination, and student assessment.

Recommendation. More operationally relevant guidelines and consultation should be provided to the state Special Needs personnel. Resources from other agencies, in particular from Special Education and Vocational Rehabilitation, should be made available in the development of the Special Needs service technology and student/client management.

Training

A great many concerns of the state Special Needs personnel relate to training and the acquisition of know-how. Some of the concern is expressed broadly, such as "identify successful procedures for effective in-service programs." Other concerns are expressed quite specifically, such as "provide in-service training for staff and administrators regarding the congressional intent of legislation governing Special Needs programs," and "pre-service and in-service training for Vocational Education personnel in identification of Special Needs." The state personnel frequently mention their own felt need for better training, occasionally adding notations to the questionnaire to make this point.

Recommendation. Interdisciplinary training specifically targeted upon Special Needs personnel at all levels should be made more available. Because of their crucial position as operating managers and designers of direct programs, in the absence of an established professional tradition and in the early years of the technology, the local Special Needs administrator would probably benefit most significantly from training opportunities. However, the state Special Needs personnel might also wish to use such an opportunity for upgrading of professional skill.

Information Exchange

While conducting the state survey, this project acquired substantial information regarding developments and training programs taking place around the country. A need for better exchange of information also appears among the expressed needs of state Special Needs personnel. Some respondents inquire whether training programs and resource materials are available, apparently unaware of what may be obtained from neighboring states.

Recommendation. A compilation of resources, particularly with regard to professional training and to curriculum development, should be made available to state Special Needs personnel and others who are interested. This might be an activity of one or more of the Resource Coordinating Units in Vocational Education.

FURTHER PLANS

The Special Education Administration Training Project making this report has begun a survey of the local Special Needs programs nominated by the state personnel. In contrast to the 100 percent returns from state personnel, local programs are responding at a much slower rate. One probable reason is the

length of the questionnaire to which they are asked to respond. Another possibility is that their roles, the subject of the inquiry sent to them, are either ambiguous or else are in a very early stage of development, thus making it difficult for them to respond. This was complicated by the fact that the questionnaire is adapted (for comparison purposes) from a previously field tested instrument that was completed by directors of Special Education. A final possibility, and one that should receive the greatest credence, is that the local directors see less immediate utility to the questionnaire activity. The motivational force felt by state personnel as a result of national criticism of the Vocational Education Special Needs programs has not apparently been felt by the local administrator who is more concerned with the immediacy of providing service.

The site visits that were planned have been aborted. One reason for this is that each program under consideration has already been visited by various observer teams until this visitation has become a burden. A more cogent reason is that the priority of site visits was dropped quite low when the focus of project activity was shifted to state level interest.

The survey of local programs will be presented as a separate report at a later date.